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AND FREE RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP

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WHAT DO UNITARIANS BELIEVE ?

THE Unitarian community in the United Kingdom is a group of some twenty-four thousand people. It has been able to maintain itself on slender resources, and transmit its faith through all the changes of generations. Familiarity blurs the faith and heroism of this. For the twenty-four thousand, for various reasons, must stand very much alone amidst religious organizations, and give an account of themselves, renew themselves, and hold themselves as a recognized religious community.

How has it been done ? There can be little dispute about the answer. Unitarians are probably no more devoted, dedicated, or possessed of the zeal of martyrs than other men of other religious bodies. They possess, in a sense, no extra faith. Their peculiar virtue is that they have thought about religion in a particular way, particularly the Christian religion, and have had the strength to follow the power and logic of their thought. In other words they have possessed the strength of intellectual veracity. They have attempted to join religious worship with integrity and daring of mind. It has not been easy, but it has been worth while, and it has enabled the group to renew itself and give to others whatever inner strength it possesses.

It is generally admitted that this small Church has attracted attention and earned a respect that its numbers would hardly suggest. Indeed, it may be claimed that the history of the body, and its influence on religious and social life has yet to be written. It may be that it will not be written for a long time.

THE LOGIC OF THOUGHT

What do Unitarians believe ? Simply the logic of their own thought. They do not offer prayer to Christ because they cannot unite the Christ of history literally with the eternal God. They are chary of creeds because creeds confound what they wish to say in unison together, and they choose another method of saying it. They are unimpressed by the past as it is presented in a series of propositions which must be believed on no or insufficient evidence. They believe that the religious experience they share together must be passionately interpreted into the daily affairs of life, and that with the same courage, and if need be loneliness of judgment, which holds them together in their community. Within this range of religious belief all types of men gather together. It is deep enough and wide enough for many religious spirits.

This, it may be claimed, is what Unitarians believe.

But the twenty-four thousand are presented with a continuous challenge. If this is the nature of their belief what does it say to the changing spiritual problems of changing generations ? What does it say to the crying spiritual problems of this immediate generation ? Indeed, the questions should go deeper and need to go deeper. What does the community say within itself of its own particular faith, known and understood, under all the new pressures from outside ? A faith is something alive; it knows itself; it is shared; it responds and reacts to changing situations; it could not command those situations if it did not. What, Unitarians need to ask themselves again and again, do we believe together ? And that, not out of a lack of faith, but through the needs of faith.

THE QUESTIONS

A new generation has arisen during the past twenty years. It has its own particular and peculiar difficulties. A new generation not only of years but of gathered experience. It would be odd indeed if men could have lived through the past twenty years without being forced to ask questions unknown to their forbears as they are known to modern man. How does what is so abiding for Unitarians speak to what is so rapidly and sometimes catastrophically changing for so many men ? What is the nature of the faith that is so abiding ? It must possess depths beneath depths. There must be central fires burning at which all can warm their hands. Nothing more to be said together ? Nothing more to be explored and acknowledged ? Not another word to be uttered in unison together ?

And an intelligent young inquirer may well come with questions on his lips. I hear, he may say, of a new word, existentialism. It has power to move and stir men. From what I know of it it moves and stirs me, and many young people like me. What do you, who have much of what you believe upon intellectual veracity, believe of this ? I hear rumours of something called demythologizing the New Testament. From the little I know of it it sounds extraordinary and exciting. Some of the men for whom I have the deepest respect in various religious bodies are using it as a new understanding of the religious teaching of the New Testament. What have you to say about it ? I read of myth and symbol as being new forms of religious understanding. What do you say about it ? There is a conflict between what I know to be humanism and theism. What do Unitarians say about that conflict ? Above all, although I am told that the social world in which I live is

much to be preferred to that of my father and grandfather, nevertheless I am cut off in it. I am an "outsider" in the society in which I live. Can I enter into that society? I want to. Can you help me?

And so on. All the questions of the contemporary generation beating for an answer.

Have the community of twenty-four thousand nothing to say? Must they rely on what has been said in the past, most of it speaking in circumstances very different? Worst of all, does it not hear the questions?

The need before the Unitarian community, as a community, is to speak in unison together about their faith. How is this to be done? An answer will be attempted next week.

NEW LIGHT ON IMMORTALITY?

By Leonard Mason

IN his Lindsey Press booklet*, just published, Basil Vinay gives three outstanding reasons why modern thinking man has become so uncertain about human immortality that he no longer believes survival after death to be possible. The first reason is the exploration of space. The sheer immensity of the universe is so overpowering that it seems to matter very little indeed whether man exists at all, let alone whether he survives in some form after death. How can man's survival be likely when not even the solar system which has cradled him, nor the huge galaxy which girdles visible space, are themselves permanent? There is no room for heaven in the natural order; you cannot find it hanging out in the void or squeezed into the nuclear crevices of matter: no room for heaven, therefore no immortality.

Mr. Vinay suggests that this is naive speculation, but recognizes that it has destroyed the visual imagery upon which much popular religion depends. To meet this he calls for fresh imaginative thinking about space and time in relation to God's infinity. Mere universal bigness and emptiness need not shake a man's religious faith. We must conceive of God as fully and equally present in an atom's orbit as in the vast curvature of observable space. It is God's ubiquitous presence which counts. Let us wrestle with the infinite and the infinitesimal, and visualize God's timeless operation within these dimensions before we dismiss the universe as a place where human value is insignificant and human survival impossible. There may even be another order of space in which the laws of matter and motion do not apply. Why should an infinite God be confined to the creation of only one order? Consciousness yields the key to life's chambers; death may be the key to the other order.

MEN WANT PROOF

Vague probability of this kind, however, will convince no one these days; men want proof, and the proof superficially at least is all on the other side. That is the contention against which this stimulating booklet is directed.

The second outstanding reason for disbelieving in survival is to be found in the current conclusions of psychology about the nature of the human self. There is felt to be no abiding, unitive self, only a sequence of mental and emotional states. All sequences pass with the conditions which produced them, therefore the sequence which seems to define a human person will pass when death obliterates the converging influences which brought that personality into focus.

Mr. Vinay believes that this need cause no despair; instead it is exhilarating to find that we have constantly to be re-creating self and re-unifying personality out of experiences which have already melted into the past out of the complex shifting states of mind in the present. This task of self-making and self-integrating, when achieved successfully, is perhaps what is required to overlap death into some new sequence of experience. Immortality then must be earned by the effort to build up into enlarged personality the separate strands of

ephemeral thoughts, moods and temperaments. I doubt if this is a real answer to the flux theory of personality, for it seems to require something distinct from the sequence of feelings to perform the task of self-integration, and this deeper essence of self is what some modern psychologists fail to find. Mr. Vinay himself acknowledges that immortality won by the effort of some self-creating ability is not his interpretation. He believes that immortality is given not earned. But here again the proposed way out of modern scepticism rests upon a hypothetical conception. Hypothesis alone will not help us over the barrier of death. Give us proof is still the demand.

The third corrosive doctrine is that mind is the product of memory, and memory is a recording of physical stimuli on the brain. Death destroys the brain's record and therefore both memory and mind are at an end. Who can believe in survival after the dissolution of mind? Here Mr. Vinay calls on Bergson. Suppose that the brain is not the true organ of memory but only a biological device for screening off irrelevant experiences so that we may respond to the present moment unhampered by disturbing recollections. Brain then is not an expression of personality, it is an organ restraining the deeper self, keeping back intuitive activity so that practical application may have unhindered play. When death dissolves the brain why should not the inner intuitive personality be liberated into something like its native habitat?

WHAT ALL GOOD MEN WANT

Mr. Vinay is not happy with this; he does not want a Bergsonian memory projected into the hereafter, he wants what all good men have wanted: to meet in Elysium departed kin and the great ones known on earth only by their works. He wants to grow in intellect and emotion far and wide enough to match God's infinity, and nothing less than another body with fresh abilities will suffice for this. If what we look for in the hereafter is an existence where we know other transformed personalities and exercise ourselves with activities of love and understanding, then we shall need a focal centre from which to engage in these pursuits. We shall need to become liberated spiritual entities. Buddhist and theosophical doctrines of absorption—the drop returning to the great ocean, the flame waxing out into the single source of all fire, the many merging into the One—fail to meet this prime hope of human beings. Love is impossible if all souls merge and become identified with each other and possibly with God, for love requires separation and distinction. Neither does the doctrine of reincarnation meet the requirements; for while it does supply another body and gives opportunity for increase in wisdom and compassion as rebirth follows rebirth, the whole series culminates in a final absorption with the source of all being when there is no further return to the wheel of life.

There remains then the immortality of personal persistence, of distinct and unitive individuality organized within the framework of a new spiritual body. This is Mr. Vinay's contention and hope. But it should be noted that this contention follows only from the earnest hope that man after death shall be separate from other entities so that he may enjoy ever increasing knowledge and ever widening love. It is an inference from the most natural human desire this side of the grave, no more therefore than a projected wish and a gallant hope.

The modern sceptic is inoculated against any wild thinking, he still asks for proof. Mr. Vinay offers it. Accepting the findings of the best in psychical research and in spiritualism, he is confident enough to declare that survival of earthly death is proved by well-attested evidence—as certainly proved at any rate as extra-sensory perception the study of which is so much in vogue at the moment.

But who are engaged in this process of proving personal survival? On the one hand a large body of often uncritical spiritualists who accept verbatim the revelations of their mediums, and on the other a tiny body of educated but not specifically religious psychical researchers. The credibility of the former and the tedious, repetitive experimentation of the latter fail to do justice to the whole field of research. Mr. Vinay asks Unitarians to take up this matter seriously. We

(Continued on page 335)

* *Immortality And You*, by Basil Vinay, Lindsey Press, 2s.

CHURCH, CHILDREN AND SUNDAY DINNER

I have never seen in any denomination's literature, writes a correspondent, a practical attempt to deal with the bogey of the Sunday dinner. In theory one should dismiss it by saying, "If people really want to come to church on Sunday morning, they'll come anyway, and this talk about cooking a meal is just an excuse from the half-hearted". But it's not so easy as that. My wife and I, for instance, have three children, the youngest only three years old, so she and I go to church with the two older ones, one parent in turn at a time; the other parent stays at home, looks after the three-year-old, washes up, does the vegetables and has dinner ready when the others come home. Very soon the youngest one will be able to come to the morning service (there is a junior church during the term) so the whole family will then be at church—no one to do the dinner. It will need quite a lot of organizing—it is bad enough getting our boy presentable by 10.30—and we can see how the practical difficulties can soon become inflated into an insuperable obstacle where both parents are inebriated, or one is keen and the other is hostile.

What I'm leading up to from the *The Inquirer's* point of view is this: What about inviting a symposium of churchmen's ideas on this matter? There must be many efficient wives and mothers who have to tackle this problem, and who have worked out ways of "managing" which would be a help and an inspiration to others. I should think that there are plenty of women in our congregations who have got recipes for dishes which can be put on over a low gas at 10 and to be ready at 1, or which can be speedily thrown together at 12.45 when you get home.

How do you manage? The Editor invites you to tell "Inquirer" parents how you solve the problem. In not more than four hundred words, please.

(Continued from page 334)

should be first in the field wherever the merest suspicion of new light glints through. Here is something to win back the sceptical to a religious outlook, here is tentative proof, not inference, that there is a dimension to life other than that explained by the physical and biological sciences, proof that this dimension stretches across the barrier of death.

Unitarians have either comfortably taken immortality on trust as a deduction from their conviction of the love of God, or else have subsided, along with modern opinion, into the position that no one can really know the truth about immortality, so best be agnostic about it. But here is something that could lift us out of our personal complacency and theological aridity if we would but explore it.

COMMENT

American Unitarian Woman Honoured

DR. CECILIA H. PAYNE-GAPOSCHKIN, a member of the Unitarian Church at Lexington, Mass., has just been appointed Professor of Astronomy at Harvard University. She is a graduate of Cambridge University. She found no opening in Britain for women in astronomy and studied and obtained her Ph.D. at Radcliffe in 1925. Her husband is also an astronomer at Harvard, and they have collaborated in a noted survey of variable stars. Husband and wife act as a stellar team. Dr. Payne-Gaposhkin studies variable stars, stars which vary in brightness, whilst her husband studies eclipsing stars. "When we come to an eclipsing star," she stated in the *New York Times*, "I would say to my husband, 'That is yours', and when we would come to a pulsating star, I would say, 'That is mine'."

Another recent honour to a Unitarian woman, this time a posthumous honour, was the appearance on a postage stamp of a portrait of the suffrage leader of the beginning of the 20th century, Susan B. Anthony, who was a member of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester, which is now considering the establishment of a memorial to this fighter for women's rights. Most Unitarian philanthropists, like their fellows everywhere, will regret the issue of "unconsecrated" stamps, but they will be glad to see a Unitarian woman honoured so signally.

Harvest Thanksgiving Festival

Most of our congregations at the present moment will have thoughts of the Harvest Thanksgiving Service in their

minds, and ministers will be puzzling their heads about finding something fresh to say on a theme which recurs year after year. The day has gone by when the theological approach, based on biblical texts, can or ought to satisfy; and the relation of our own harvest to the harvests of all nations is seen to be closely related to the subject of world-population and the development of the still under-developed countries.

It so happens that Lord Boyd-Orr has just given an extraordinarily clear and authoritative view of these problems. In his view, if the population of the world continues to expand at its present rate, the world population will be 4,000 millions—double what it was in 1939; but at the same time he considers that if production on all the land already under cultivation were brought up to the level of the most efficient in each area, the world food supply would be doubled.

He, indeed, cites the case of the suburbs of Georgetown, British Guiana, where by the use of D.D.T. the infant mortality fell in two years from 350 to 67 per 1,000, so that the population increased at a rate which, if kept up, would double itself every seven years; but he gives his reasons for believing that if every effort is made to better the standard of living in all countries, there will be a salutary fall in the birth-rate. The moral, of course, is unceasing effort to bring about that rise in standards through the World Bank and other United Nations agencies. That this effort cannot be taken for granted is shown by the advocacy by at least one London paper that because the World Bank has enabled Egypt to buy wheat from Canada, therefore we should withdraw our support of that Bank. To my mind, the incident shows how admirably the World Bank functions above politics.

A Pan-Negro Movement

The Congress of Negro Writers and Artists, which took place at the Sorbonne in Paris recently, represents a Pan-Negro movement that might yet rival in international importance and significance the Bandung Conference and the Arab League. In it were Negro intellectuals from the United States, the British West Indies and Haiti; but there seemed to be a different and less enthusiastic approach to the purposes of the Congress on the part of American Negroes who, it was said by a French African, wanted to be American above all.

Negroes from Belgian, Portuguese and French colonies seemed to be far more hostile to Western culture than those from the British colonies, in spite of the fact that the British did not aim at assimilation; and it is hardly to be expected that people from the British West Indies, who, after all, have little culture that is not derived from the West, or at any rate, conditioned by the West, should be entirely at home with people among whom African tradition and mentality is a reality. Although, as was to be expected, much was said against colonialism, there was also applause when a British West Indian asked for honest self-criticism, and for a consideration of what such a union has to offer when colonialism is a thing of the past. It seems probable that British, West Indian and American Negroes have too little in common with the Congress to suggest a permanent alliance, but as representative of the native African much may yet be heard of it, even if its attitude to Western culture be equivocal.

Commentator.

THE FATHER OF MODERN INDIA

By Margaret Barr

(Rajni Ram Mahan Roy, was the founder of the *Brahmo Samaj*, the Indian Unitarian Movement. For various reasons, too, he has been given the above title. The following is an address delivered recently about him by Margaret Barr.)

FOR over twenty years it has been my privilege to be the official representative in India of the group of churches to which this one belongs, the General Assembly of Unitarian

and Free Christian Churches, with which Ram Mohan Roy had close contact during his lifetime and succeeding generations of his followers in the Brahmo Samaj ever since.

Nowadays, we are all to some extent, students of Comparative Religion, but in his time few knew anything about it and very few of the great scriptures were available in translations. And so he studied language after language, Sanscrit, Pali, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Persian and many more, in order to plumb for himself the depths of the teaching of the world's great religions. This study led him at last to what he described as "the momentous discovery," not, as he had at first supposed, that each great religion contained one part of the universal truth and that the religion of the future would be a sort of synthetic product obtained by gathering the bits and putting them together like a gigantic jig-saw puzzle, but that each had got *The Truth*, overlaid, no doubt, by much that was false and distorted but containing at its heart the knowledge of the One God and opening up a path by which the souls of men could obtain that knowledge.

From then on his work lay in stripping from that central core the accretions that hid it. And the fact that most ordinary mortals, milling about at lower levels of intellectual and spiritual development, still need the accretions in the form of creeds and dogmas, rites and ceremonies, does not in any way whatever dim the splendour of that "momentous discovery".

It is the great tragedy of the history of religion that so often the accretions are mistaken for the core and even those who by tireless striving reach the core, so often imagine that the accretions that have meant so much to them and helped them to reach the inner shrine, are themselves essential and even unique. And so we see the strange and sad phenomenon of that which should unite becoming one of the most potent forces of disunity and conflict, and men and women to whom religion means everything, imagining that their duty to the God who has revealed his beauty to them demands that they should devote their lives to the closing of every path save theirs and the repudiation, as false, of every revelation save the one to which they owe their own salvation. Ram Mohan Roy led us by another path than this one when he dared to assert that no one of the historic religions enjoyed uniqueness or a monopoly of truth or even superiority, but that each, when purged of its accretions by its adherents, would appear in its true colours, as one of the many paths that lead to the One God.

The New India

This is a message that the world needs to-day, at least, as much as when he first proclaimed it. It is the message of the group of churches which I represent, the message of Tagore and Gandhi, Ramakrishna and Radhakrishnan, the message of the new education in India which is seeking to train up a generation of citizens who shall have learnt from their earliest years to honour and respect faiths other than their own, while yet remaining utterly loyal to their own.

There are many things that would rejoice the heart of Ram Mohan Roy if he could see his country to-day, things which rejoice the heart of all us who love that country. Women taking their place as equal citizens with men and prominent in every field of work and service; would not that rejoice the heart of him who in his lifetime fought the ancient tradition which decreed that a woman's life should end with the death of her husband? Two crops where there used to be but one; wells and irrigation channels for the use of the lowliest; health services and mobile dispensaries taking help and hope to the poorest; fans and comfort for long distance travellers even in those compartments on the trains which cater for the toiling millions who have little to spend even on necessary travel and nothing at all for luxuries; wealthy landowners voluntarily putting with their surplus acres for distribution to the landless; a heroic attempt being made by the democratic rulers of the country even to curb the power and break the stranglehold of that last refuge of vested interest, the money-lender. — would not all these rejoice the heart of one who though rich and comfortable himself, never ceased to lift up his voice against exploitation and injustice and to

plead for the widow and the fatherless, the outcasts and the neglected? And perhaps above all would be the spreading of educational opportunity to the poorest and lowliest, irrespective of caste or creed and the courageous attempt to turn education into a force for unity instead of conflict.

Ram Mohan Roy, the Father of Modern India, the man whose life and message paved the way for the even greater leader of his country and the world whom we in this age have been privileged to know and love and are still privileged to follow in all that we do for India and the world, and who said, "It is not the Hindu religion on which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes ones very nature; which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies". "The religion which transcends," is not this the centre and soul of the message of Ram Mohan Roy, in honour of whose memory we are to-day met together? And shall we not most honour him if, not with our lips but in our lives, we reveal as Gandhiji did, the truth of that momentous discovery of his, and in the spirit and power of the religion which transcends the religions, worship, each in our own way, the One God whom wise poets since the days of the Rig Veda have called by many names though he is One; and in the knowledge and love of that One God go forth, as he did, to devote our lives and all that we have and are to the service of our fellowmen and the spreading of the spirit of unity and concord throughout the world?

PROFILE OF A COMMUNITY

By Dudley Richards

THE congregation which meets in the "tin tabernacle" on Broadway Avenue, in the friendly, thriving, unlovely and yet interesting city of Bradford, celebrates this month the jubilee of its foundation. It is fifty years since a group of people followed their minister, the late William Rosling, out of a local Congregational church and were welcomed into the Unitarian fold. Through the friendly offices of the minister and congregation of the historic cause at Chapel Lane money was collected for a new church, and the present plain and simple building was quickly erected. It is not a thing of beauty and a photograph of it would hardly adorn these pages. But inside, especially since the thorough redecoration of a few years ago, the plainness and simplicity of construction has a certain attractiveness.

In recent years the renewal of the outer fabric has become a pressing matter; for the building was intended to be no more than a temporary home, and the corrugated iron had so far rotted in parts, that, as the present writer knows from experience, it was possible, without exerting much force, to poke one's finger through it. In such cases, a repair was effected by painting round the hole, covering it with a piece of canvas, and putting more paint on top. A patched church, in fact. The jubilee preparations and plans include improvements of various kinds, and gradually the corrugated iron will be replaced by a suitable modern weatherproof material.

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To-day the Congregational mother-church houses a government office. Even the large grandmother in the centre of the city serves some municipal need. The heretical granddaughter and daughter continues to be the home, the temple, of a worshipping community. There are still one or two members who can recall the first days when they went out into the wilderness with a beloved leader, and the kindness of new comrades who said: "Come with us and we will do you good". To these pioneers has been added through the years a small but compact company of people of the same type—sturdy, self-reliant, independent folk with a mind of their own. "With half-a-dozen people like that" a minister who knew them well remarked some years ago, "you could move town halls". To-day they are without a minister, but that is no new experience. The church has had ministers; over half a century ago out of its fifty years of life. Let us record, in its listing history, the years 1918-1942.

For the larger part of this time, being reduced in numbers and without a minister, and having difficulty in obtaining supplies, the community felt unable to do more than maintain the celebration of such outstanding events as the Harvest and Church anniversary services. But in all these years the cause of the children was never abandoned, and the Sunday School was maintained faithfully and lovingly. Towards the end of this period the community felt sufficiently revived to begin to hold services of worship more frequently.

Probably no congregation of our household of faith has been more concerned than "Broadway" for the needs of young people. The Sunday School is an integral part of the church, financed and fostered by it. The building itself has promoted this integration; for when there is only one large room to serve as church, school and social meeting place as well, young and old are constantly in each other's company. We may add that even on week-days the building is not idle, for the congregation is glad to turn an honest and necessary penny, and serve children in another way, by letting its premises to the local education authority. That is why, at the end of the Sunday service, volunteers roll up carpets, put out tables, and wheel the pulpit into its garage in the cloakroom.

In 1946 a letter went out from the congregation to the local evening paper, urging that individuals should be allowed to send parcels of food to hungry Europe. It was only by a coincidence that, forty-eight hours later, the Government decreed permission for such humanity. The church at once opened its premises for the receiving of gifts of food. A special collection of food was made once a month on the occasion of the family service, and other churches were invited to adopt the same practice. A response came from all over the city, and amongst others, the Provost of Bradford Cathedral brought his offering in baskets, and, from his pulpit, mentioned the name of the church with honour for the lead it had given to the city in this good work. Several tons of food were packed by willing hands, and for a long time the vestry looked like a small grocer's shop. In the files of the church "Chronicle" may be read deeply moving letters of gratitude from various parts of the Continent.

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And what of service to our own larger cause? Broadway's present secretary-treasurer was for more than twenty years secretary of the Yorkshire Sunday School Union; and to-day the treasurer of the Yorkshire Unitarian Union is the chairman of the church. The president and secretary of the Yorkshire lay-preachers' Union are a young husband and wife in the congregation. The editors of the *Young Unitarian*, and the editor of the *Inquirer Youth Supplement* are both sons of the community. The latter is one of the ministers whom the church has given to the denomination. We may say "ministers" for we have surely some right to include the late J. Prestwich Rosling, the beloved and honoured son of Broadway's first minister. Moreover, the present secretary of the Religious Education and Youth Department owes to the church his opportunity to qualify as a minister on the Assembly roll; and he looks back with thankfulness on his years of service among these free, friendly and happy people.

Broadway Avenue Church is not a historic cause in the usual sense of that phrase. But behind it lie fifty years of struggle and achievement. The community is closely knit together, and under devoted and thoughtful guidance it maintains a vigorous life in the present. It will surely celebrate more jubilees of service to God and to his children.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letters should be addressed to the Editor, "The Inquirer," 14 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1. They should not in general exceed three to four hundred words in length.

Children and Church

Sir.—In Union the theory that children should not be sent to Church has never been heard of. Non-Churchmen frequently accuse Churchmen as soon as they have children old enough to come with them for the children's sake. The theory, however,

has penetrated among Unitarians with certain results. In over thirty years I have known six cases. In one a charming young lady, who indeed had been dissuaded from attending her own Church, suddenly became an ardent Roman Catholic which means more than embarrassment to a family in this part of the world. One young man became a Jehovah's Witness. Two young people became Plymouth Brethren firmly believing that their Unitarian parents were damned and creating a complete break-up of a once happy home. One other young man became a Seventh Day Adventist and another is now a curate in the Church of Ireland. They have chosen for themselves. Or have they? In each case they have either been influenced by their surroundings or, as one might expect, by a member of the opposite sex who had convictions while they had none. These and those who will come after them are lost to our Church.

What is at the back of this theory? Any religion is apparently right if it suits people. Our own means so little to us that there is nothing in it worth teaching to our children. If any other suits them or pleases them so be it. But surely even if all these things are so there should be no harm in bringing children up in a tolerant Church which will give them every opportunity to decide which religion is the right one when they reach an age which will enable them to decide that slightly difficult question. Or is what lies behind it the great Unitarian delusion that people decide their religion by reason? They do not. There is a religious vacuum in the best of young people which will be filled and if we make no effort to fill it there are plenty around us who will and who have no doubts as to how it should be filled and who will not wait till children are grown up to start filling it. The idea that our own faith is no better than any other and that it would be even wrong to influence our own children to adopt it and that they will make a wise choice after duly examining all the claims urged upon them by every religion but our own when they grow up is based on an utter ignorance of psychology and plain facts and another example of that leaning over backwards in an attempt to be vertical which is one of the reasons why we do not grow. But it sounds so superior and high-minded to proclaim that we leave our children to form their own religious opinions when they grow up that we shall go on doing it. One thing we may be sure of is that our grandchildren will not be left the same liberty.—Yours,

Belfast.

A. L. Agnew.

Mission or Not?

Sir.—For six months I have been explaining why I do not wish to be called a "missionary" or have my work thought of as "missionary work". "Commentator's" comments in this week's *Inquirer* suggests that, in spite of my efforts, there is still some misunderstanding on the subject.

The word "missionary" in India means not a disinterested social worker but one whose major aim is proselytization. The new India is making a determined effort to rid herself of all such, and in this she has my whole-hearted sympathy. I did not go to the Khasi Hills with the aim of proselytization, and should not have gone at all, nor been financed all these years by the G.A. had there not already been in existence an indigenous Unitarian Church needing and asking for our help.

"Commentator's" impression that the reason that the British Unitarians wished to support the congregations in the Khasi Hills was that they were an outpost of our faith in a dark corner and should be strengthened so that they could give a powerful witness to the Unitarian faith is perfectly correct. But that outpost has never been a "mission" church. It owes its existence to the vision and courage of a Khasi, and will be able to give a powerful witness to the Unitarian faith when (and only when) his successors within his church reach the heights and depths of his faith and by the power and beauty of their lives draw others into its orbit, and not by any sort of "missionary" activity on the part of myself or any other person from outside.

My part has always been to provide opportunities (previously lacking) for some of these people to get the higher standard of education and general culture without which they cannot follow in his steps as leaders in their tribe and their church; and at the same time to do such disinterested social and welfare work as lies in my power amongst people both inside and outside the church.

Gandhi's answer to missionaries always was, "Don't talk about your religion. Live it and it will speak for itself." This is what I try to do. Yours,

Phiroze Rustom Cama,
Shilling P.O., Assam.

Margaret Barr.

"Supreme Being"

Sir.—A copy of the message to be read on G.A. Sunday has just reached me. It would now seem, according to this message, that Unitarians are committed to a doctrine of God as a Supreme

Being. Surely to try to limit our experience of God to any such definition is a mistake. To some of us at any rate, God is not a Supreme Being, i.e. a part of reality, but the whole of it. In other words, God is not a Being but Being.

The anthropomorphic language of devotion which we use in our Church services, is surely intended to be used in a poetic and not in a scientific sense.

It seems to me that in its somewhat frantic efforts to counter Humanism, the Unitarian Movement in this country is now falling back upon Nineteenth Century idolatry. That is a pity, and to my mind, quite unnecessary.—Yours,

Rotherham,

N. J. Teape.

"No Free Seats"

Sir,—Thank you for your fine editorial under the above heading. I particularly like your remark to the effect that "conventional religion, in all denominations, assumes that it has all the answers without much of a price being paid for them". How true that is; and never are we more aware of it than over the radio. Are we, the listeners, ever invited from pulpit or studio to discuss with open mind fundamental religious questions? Not on your life! We are told that Jesus of Nazareth was "God in human form"—that "Christian Origins" are synonymous with the factual inerrancy of the Gospel records—and that the social and economic conditions of our people do not call to be urgently looked at through the magnifying glass of the Sermon-on-the-Mount! And lots more! And we are informed that all this fatuous stuff is to be regarded as "religious broadcasting". Why should intelligent men and women, when they settle down to listen to a "religious broadcast" be considered as "nitwits"?

You rightly say that there are "no free seats before the eternal verities". We have to win our way to these verities by the free use of our human minds—our divine gift of human reason. But not with the approval of the B.B.C. Religious Broadcasting Committee. That has pledged itself to the "invited audience". What a tragedy it is!—Yours,

Worthing

Malcolm Rutt.

"An Urgent Plea"

Sir,—In this matter of presentation of our faith; is it wise to think of commissioning a new volume on the old lines wherein the contributors must present the faith in cool and scholarly fashion?

Some of us have been stirred by articles in *The Inquirer*. These articles have been warm, issuing fresh from mind and heart. Must we put the living word in attic or cellar or yield it to the salvage collector and then search for some comparatively dead mechanism to take its place?

Some ask us at odd times and in odd places what our faith is. To give answers satisfactory to ourselves would dislocate business and hold up traffic. So we give outline sketches or mere skeletons, painfully aware that we are leaving out the colour, omitting the flesh and blood, failing as Kenneth Twinn has it, "to speak out of the warring of our own experience". *Inquirer* articles such as I have mentioned have not so failed. The commissioned essays tend to fail.

Here is my plan. Let readers send their words of appreciation, not for publication, but as witness that such and such an article has quickened their heart-beat and made them excitedly aware of spiritual companionship. So the choice of articles to be re-published will be determined not by some coterie of "professional philosophers" but by the universal suffrage of Unitarians who care. The re-publication will be in book form.

There could even be an "Inquirer Year Book" keeping the presentation of our living faith up-to-date. It would show how Unitarians reacted not only to theological antiquities and novelties but also to the more immediately human problems of the year.—Yours,

Leeds.

John Hindle.

Sir,—What exactly is contemplated; a short statement of faith, say of some 200 words, which could be used as a propaganda leaflet; or an elaborate treatise, comparable in size to "A Free Religious Faith"? Does our understanding of the Eternal Verities really change so rapidly that another joint treatise is required? In any event, should such materialize, let it be written in lucid, simple language, so that the intelligent reader can understand it well.—Yours,

Sturges.

Basil Vinay.

Sir,—May I also support "An Urgent Plea" and thank Rev. Kenneth Twinn for his emphasis on our need for a simple exposition of our faith and practice, and for his reminder that our congregations consist mainly of people who are not professional philosophers. I have for a long time been disturbed in my mind at the tendency amongst us to lose every day thing like

the Athenians and to be so busy proving all things that we forget to hold fast to what is good. We seem to be in danger of becoming entangled again in bondage from which our fathers and grandfathers freed us.—Yours,

Preston.

E. N. Lee.

Invitation to Students

Sir,—The Oxford term begins on October 13. I shall be very grateful to any minister or reader who can give me the names and addresses of any young men or women coming up to Oxford to begin their academic course.—Yours,

Manchester College, Oxford.

L. A. Gurnard.

THE INQUIRER

All letters and suggestions for the Editor must reach the Editor not later than Monday morning for consideration. All communications must be accompanied by the name and address of the contributor, and must be sent to the Editor, c/o The Inquirer, 14, Gower Street, London, W.C.2. All letters must be signed and must be sent to the Editor, c/o The Inquirer, 14, Gower Street, London, W.C.2. All letters must be signed and must be sent to the Editor, c/o The Inquirer, 14, Gower Street, London, W.C.2.

NEWS REVIEW

Northumberland and Durham District Association

On Saturday, September 22, the President of the General Assembly, Mr. C. H. Pollard, visited Chippington, Northumberland. The occasion was of a two-fold nature—the 111th Anniversary Service of the District Association, and the Re-dedication of the Chippington Church, which had undergone extensive repairs owing to subsidence caused by underground mining operations. Redecoration of the premises and the installation of a new lighting system were considered necessary by the local congregation, and towards these costs the General Assembly contributed generously.

The Re-dedication Service was conducted by Rev. J. H. Curran Davies and the address was given by the President, who also unveiled a handsome hymnboard in memory of the Rev. Herbert Barnes, a much loved friend of the Chippington Church.

About 60 friends were present. Prior to the Re-dedication Service, and also following it, the Annual Business Meetings of the District Association and the Women's League were held.

On the Sunday following, the President preached at the morning service of the Church of the Divine Unity, Newcastle, and the devotional part of the service was conducted by Mr. E. Wright of the Unitarian College, Manchester. The Rev. J. H. Curran Davies conducted the evening service.

In the afternoon the President travelled to Stockton where he preached in the evening in a joint congregation of the Stockton and Middlesbrough Churches.

Women's League: The Manchester District Women's League held its Autumn Meeting on September 19 at Stockport, when 199 members, representing 29 branches, attended.

The Service was conducted by the Rev. Elsie Vallance who at the request of Miss Barr read one of Emily Barrett's poems to which in her address Miss Barr referred as a declaration of faith from a woman to all women.

After a very enjoyable and a short business meeting was held—Mrs. Whitburn in the chair gave a warm welcome to Mrs. Young Jones of Allington, Washington, U.S.A., who is visiting League Branches in this country.

Miss Barr then gave her talk on her work in India and expressed her thanks to all members of the League for their continued support and encouragement. A singing collection was taken for the India Fund.

Fulham: On Wednesday, September 26, a mid-week Harvest Service was held in the Chapel, conducted by the Minister. This is a new venture for Fulham, and it was pleasing to see a good number of people taking advantage of this opportunity.

Sunday, September 24th, the Harvest Services were conducted by Rev. G. L. Clarke, the children taking a big part in the afternoon service, when the "Queen" Miss E. M. Waddington, received their gifts of fruit. The fruit and flowers were distributed to the sick and aged on Monday afternoon by the ladies.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1991

THE LINDSEY PRESS

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A vacancy has occurred in the above Charity and the Trustees invite applications from Maiden Gentlewomen of the County of Kent or London, of the age of 50 years and upwards, who are dissenters of the Unitarian persuasion.

The Charity provides a house, and other benefits may include an income of £30 per annum and coal.

No person can be appointed who has received Parish Relief and who does not come within the above description.

Forms of application, which must be completed and returned by October 31, can be obtained from the Clerk to the Charity: Miss D. E. Hillier, 10 Mill Street, Maidstone.

BANK STREET CHAPEL, BOLTON

CENTENARY RE-UNION

Saturday, October 20

Tea, 4.30.

Re-Union Meeting, 6.30

Principal Guests:

REV. J. C. FLOWER, M.A., Ph.D., and MRS. FLOWER

Other Speakers: Rev. R. W. Wilde, M.A., Ph.D., Mrs. J. Percy Taylor, Mr. Alfred Pilling, O.B.E.

—o—

Dr. Flower will also preach on Sunday, October 21, 10.30 and 6.30.

Changes of Address

Rev. G. E. Hale, 29c Rochester Street, Leabrook, Adelaide, S. Australia.

Rev. Ernest G. Green, 61 Sackville Gardens, Ilford, Essex.

Deaths

Crook—On September 23, 1956, peacefully, at her home, Woodlands Hall, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, Hilda Crook, widow of Edward Tipping Crook, aged 90.

The

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Miss Marion Westley

Miss Marion Westley who died suddenly in her eighty-second year will be greatly missed by the Maidstone congregation and by her friends at the Lewisham Church.

It was while still young that she became a Unitarian and remained a faithful, loyal and generous supporter of our cause. Her appreciation of our faith was very real and deep. She liked its commonness, for she had an abundance of it, and on one occasion she said, "Unitarianism is real. It brings one through." It certainly brought her through an exceptionally hard working life, and she embodied the great strengths of our faith—integrity, honesty and the liberal open-mind.

During the last few years Miss Westley was seriously crippled, but all who knew her marvelled at her high courage, her stoicism and patient endurance. We shall remember and honour her, and she will be greatly missed.

The Rev. Denbigh Hilton officiated at the service held in the Maidstone Church and afterwards at Charing Crematorium. M.H.

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